

THE TYRE MONOLOGUES

by Barrie Robinson

SUMMATION

The response to the question on tyres produced an enormous amount of opinions and so far I have not definitely made up my mind where to go to fill my void begging for wheels. I will buy 72 stainless spoke Dayton wire wheels. I have them on my MGB GT V8 and they seem fine. My Maserati Mistral had Borrani's, beautiful, but they are so wildly expensive. As to the responses I have edited rather brutally for which I make no apologies. The idea was to cut to the chase and so I cut out chat and corrected spelling and English in some cases. If you contributed and do not appear below then I do apologise but it was rough keeping track. What became apparent was that there were different drivers who required different tyres. Belting around the track is somewhat different to cruising down the country lanes. So I have made no conclusion as to what tyre is best – because there are no bests just betters.

Tony Cove sent this link in – fabulous – biased? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7IC7wyDoXc>

The following is a snapshot of comments which I composed for my own satisfaction and I have to admit that I lean towards Pirelli Cinturato. This maybe because I used to get them free when I was younger – much younger !!!

Avon Turbosteel

Not good in wet – Very good in the wet (hmmm?). Heavy steering
Choppy. Too big for spare tray. Good with 72 spokes
£215 - £165

Avon Turbospeed

165/95-16 terrific.
Lethal in wet. Terrible. Happy

Vredestein

Better in wet (than Avon?) Too large for DB2 tyre tray
Not as good as Turbosteels. Good. Worked well
£354

Michelin X

Longstone says – good kit

Michelin Pilote X

Excellent but expensive. Heavy steering

Blockley

185x16 good. Some bad rumours

Pirelli Cinturato

Brilliant. Excellent. Heavy steering

RESPONSES IN NO ORDER

A good deal at Longstone as far as I could see on the reproduction 175 XAS 14 Michelins. Ordered twice in the past year from Longstone Tyre. Once was XAS 175 R 14 for my RO 80. The tires arrived in Canada in four days and "Postage" was included in the quoted price. Best to deal with them by phone ultimately and get clear on the pricing, because I had the incorrect price as I used the incorrect part of their web site. I notice they offer a discount in the "Bulletin" the Morgan Three Wheeler Club monthly magazine.

George Ormsby

Go with the Avon Turbosteel unless you are going to be driving in the wet a lot then go with the Vredestein. Since shipping is included in the price of the Avons they appear to be a good deal from Longstone I have had Vredestein Sprint Classics fitted for the past seven years - now on my second set. They are VERY good, especially in the wet, but expensive in the 185x16 size <http://www.tiresbyweb.com/p-9410-vredestein-sprint-classic-tires.aspx> at \$354 each-but this includes shipping. I find the tires very quiet. A friend who has Avons in the same size on his DB4 finds them very noisy. One concern with the Michelin Pilote is the 190 section. I have no spare room when fitting the 185 Vredesteins into the spare wheel compartment of my DB2 and I suspect the Michelin might not fit-anybody tried? The only price I have found for Pilotes in north America is \$592 from Coker tire. Looked over the Longstone site and but could not find any price other than the one I mentioned which is identical to the price from Tires by Web <http://www.tiresbyweb.com> in the USA. I did however look at their video for tires suitable for the DB2. Their man "Dougal" eulogizes the Michelin Pilot and even the original Michelin X but will not give the Vredestein the time of day! Something is going on here...has he had a dispute with the manufacturer and is getting back at them? Here is Longstone Tyres statement on their site:

"The Dutch company Vredestein make radial tyres in the size 185HR16. Vredestein tyres are proving very popular with the XK Jags because it, historically, has a very low price"

So, Jag owners are too cheap to pay for decent tires? Gimme a break! Longstone have their knickers in a twist over something and it isn't caused by the performance of the Vredestein tires. I am on my second set of Vredesteins, I drive very hard. I have been very impressed with these tires. Longstone Tyre, damns them with faint praise by calling them a "cheap alternative". At almost \$400 each they ain't cheap and they work very well indeed so I have to wonder what is Longstone's angle on this?

David Birchall

I spent months pondering whether to replace the ancient Avon crossplies with Avon radials on my 1959 MkIII. I eventually opted for radials, figuring that I could live with the slightly heavier steering when parking. HOWEVER I find the radials seem to give a more choppy ride, the additional width (185mm against 6.0") has meant that the inner wing catches the edge of the rear tyres (despite replacing the rear springs!). Overall I wish that I had stuck with crossplies!

Further to Alan's comments, I agree about the heavy steering at low speed on radials. I too was at Greenwich yesterday and the roads on the run in were so bad that my 185 x16 Avon radials both rubbed on the rear wheel arches (despite having new rear springs and only 2 of us in the car). I'm going to try and source some 175x16 for the rear wheels as I don't want longer rear springs as the car won't sit correctly when empty.

David Hubbard

I am using Avon turbo speeds 165/95-16 – 6.00H16 6PR on my MkIII, terrific. Have tubes

The Dayton 16 inch look the part, and the turbo speed fit the design specs of the suspension. Turbo steels or any radial will make the steering too heavy for parking, which it is already. And the breakaway of radials is too swift to catch a car of that age without being a Jackie Stewart. Longstones are the masters in sourcing the appropriate tyres, great website. <http://www.longstonetyres.co.uk>

Marc Marantz

As far as I know, DB 2/4 mk I & DB mk III are in 600 x 16. Mine are brand new Michelin 600 R 16 Pilote X ones, they were bought by the last owner who said me that they are excellent. Here is the web site. <http://tinyurl.com/oecrxa9>

If you have to buy new wheels, be careful ! the right ones are 60 spokes, not the 72 ones : it's not written on my astonuts page (http://astonuts.free.fr/PAGES/2-4tools_E.html), but I can send you the right information about this if you want for the technical jottings I don't know if Michelin has a subcontractor, but they engage Michelin responsibility (there is the brand name on it). In the case they use a subcontractor, they control the quality of course ... with there new rubber technologies.

Even if the wheels are tubeless, I prefer to use tubes, just in case.

I won't buy Good Year tyres anymore, I had three bad experiences with them on my daily car (hernias).

Alban Chaignon

Can't beat Avons in my book.

Adam Gilchrist

I agree that the Turbosteels were fine for me but would still recommend David Reed's ball races instead of bronze thrust washers for the kingpins.

When we had our DB2, I used Turbosteels from Avon but had to deflate the spare to get it into the boot space. I did carry a pump so not too hard to inflate when needed. And they were a good deal cheaper than that – and had good road holding I found.

John Browning

Turbo Steels!!!! Longstone video is interesting Tony, his point about the Avon not being that tall doesn't really matter when you consider the majority of the cars on the Tour were sitting a little lower anyway. As I said, come highly recommended while there were a number of people that were very "anti" the Michelin.

Pretty much every single Feltham on the Tour Auto was on Avon's. They are a fabulous tyre, and much more predictable on break-away than for example the Michelin. I wouldn't run on anything else and the other chaps on the Tour were all of the same opinion having tried considerably more options than I have.

Rick Pearson

Chris at Four Ashes suggested that I reduce the rear arch inner lip when the corrosion repair was carried out, That would reduce the chance of fouling with the wider radial tyre.

Tony Cove

David Reed from Davron is right, the Vredestein are great (more modern rubber with and too far from period look) and lot cheaper...

Philippe Bernard

I have used "taxi" tyres 175 x 16 (6 ply) which don't laugh have not been unsatisfactory and are good value for money. I have now fitted Blockley tyres 185 x 16 and gone tubeless on new wheels - these seem good to me.

Roger Arden

I have used radials on my Mk1 for the last 20 years, and they completely change the choppy unpredictable handling to that of a modern car, you need all the help you can get with tyre performance on today's modern roads and conditions. Crossplies in the wet road are lethal. Try some one else's car first if you are concerned

Peter Brown

I have tried three on my MkII. The Avon Turbospeed crossplies may be nearest to the original, are fine in the dry, but lethal in the wet.

The Avon Turbosteel 'pseudo-radials' are what many in the UK have used, and are not a bad all-round solution. They have a somewhat "square" section, and don't quite fit the wheel arch as well as the originals, though. Steering is a bit heavy, as has been commented, particularly at low speeds, parking, etc.

I have put on the Michelin 600-16 Pilote X Course - ie a racing tyre, mentioned by David and Andrea. They are, as suggested, cripplingly expensive at over £300 a tyre, maybe more in N America (?). However, they are the right size, they fit the wheel arch, and more to the point they dramatically improve road holding, steering accuracy, and even overall comfort. I don't yet know how long they last, and I may be in for serious financial disappointment, but, as Michelins, they should be OK..... Don't know how current supply is, though.

Howard Browning

With 35 years of DB MkIIIs on road and track, I've tried most of them. For what it's worth...

Avon Turbospeed – terrible tyre, don't do it at any price

Avon Turbosteel – very good all round tyre – road and race, good in the wet

Dunlop 600 x 16 R5 – this is a road legal racing tyre with historic race pattern (slightly narrow) – excellent in the dry, so-so wet

Dunlop 600 x 16 L – most historic race organisers insist on these for Feltham Astons, good in dry, so-so wet

Michelin Pilote X – expensive, heavy, good road tyres, but steering heavy

Vredestein Sport – all rounder... not as good as the Avon Turbosteel

Blockley - 5 block pattern... heard only bad reports, heavy, originally designed for older cars

Blockley – 185 VR 16 Radial New, no reports in yet

For all those looking for tyres in the UK, I can happily recommend HP Tyres

in Daventry. <http://www.hptyres.co.uk/>

Although they are the main dealer for Dunlop racing tyres, they are very helpful (ask for John or Steve) and can supply almost any tyre at a very competitive rate... and if you take your car/tyres to them they will fit and balance for free. They support most of the major historic race events – UK and Europe and will supply and fit your tyres at these meetings if booked in advance.

Jon Gross

I run Avon Turbospeeds on my Aston Mk1 essentially the same car as a MK11 as mine has the 3 litre engine with Vantage cams . I have run the Aston over the years fairly extensively on many race circuits around Europe and some long distance rallies. For road use Turbospeeds look right and handle well provided they are on 72 spoke rims. The difference in handling between 56 spoke(the originals are 56 spoke) and 72 spoke is stratospheric. The offset is slightly different but the 72 spoke still look ok. If you are going to do any competition work then Dunlop R5's either L or M sections are both ok but if my memory serves me correctly the car is quicker on M sections. All these tyres are crossplies don't be tempted to go to radials the car was not designed for them. Road use, stick with the Turbospeeds . I have travelled on these tyres at 130 mph in my car on route nationals in France . They are the equivalent of trunk roads in England and it is this type of road that suits the Newport Pagnell/Farsley Rd cars best of all . It is what the car was designed for, to travel these roads very quickly. I hope the above helps

I still have my 56 spoke wheels as I am a stickler for originality and they were rebuilt with new spokes and hubs but the transformation on 72 spokes is quite remarkable I would not have believed the difference unless I had tried it. It all depends on what you are going to use the car for. Avons in the UK will be about Â£250-300 + inner tubes about another Â£50 so I agree not cheap . The other option is if you come to the UK you could always get some used Dunlop R5's off one of the racers . There will be still some tread on but not enough for

racing on but good enough for road use and they look the part on the car. R5's were used in the 50's. The other tyre to consider which a lot of Vintage and Historic people use is Blockley based in the Cotswolds. Not sure how much they are but probably cheaper than Avons. Whatever you use don't buy radials they are unsuited to the car. You have probably not driven one of these cars yet. It will not drive like your MG they are much more vintage in feel and handling . The brakes are good for 2-3 hard applications then they are gone and when I say gone I mean no braking . The cars stick down moderately well on the right tyres and can be driven hard but when I get in mine after a modern car I feel it takes 50 miles of driving to get really into driving it well. Setting the cars up is critical and best done by a professional in terms of caster and toe in extra extra. Don't skimp on this and don't skimp on the wheels and tyres or you will hate the car. I have probably done more hard miles in these cars than most other people . The bulk of people buy a car and drive 2-3 miles to the pub. Some events I have done have been 2-3000 miles in 5 days plus I have run the car around pretty much every great circuit in Europe from the Nurburgring , Silverstone, Rheims, Clermont Feraund, Paul Ricard, Monza, Dijon, Hockenheim, Spa and many others. So I have more experience than most people with these cars. The chap that did the Tour Auto is probably like me and has used the car a lot so he will also know what he is talking about and he recommends Avons. Most of the people giving you advice have probably not done more than 1000 miles in the car even if they have owned it 10 years. Ignore what these people tell you they will know little of how the car truly behaves. I spent a huge amount of money getting the car right, my life depended on it and I still love driving it hard and could jump into it today and drive it to Italy and back with no qualms . Get the car right and you will love it, skimp and believe me you will hate it with a vengeance and it will bite you .

Paul Hindle

My suggestion is get in touch with Longstone in the UK. They are excellent at advising on suitable tyres. I use Pirellis which are very good but I know a lot of people who use Avons.

I have literally just finished this year's Mille Miglia in my 1953 DB2 on a set of Pirellis. I can get the size- but they are largely identical to the Avons and Dunlops. They did a brilliant job. We had ever sort of weather- including heavy rain- and road- including a lot of tight driving on what might best be described as Italian goat tracks. Interesting a lot of similar cars were also using the same Pirelli tyres- such as early 212 and 225 Ferraris. I got these from Longstone in England. I know someone doubted their credentials but I have used them for years to send tyres to Australia and feel they need defending. I have used them for tyres for cars as diverse as a 250GT Ferrari through to a pre War Alfa. They can send me tyres within about 5 business days to Australia and do so at no delivery cost. I have always found it best to call them to discuss what I use the car for. I don't race the Aston so they didn't recommend the Dunlops. They felt the Pirelli were a good all round tyre for rapid driving.

Brendan Quinn

These are RAV4 tyres which have worked well for more than 10 years and I think they look fine.

Paul Brunet

I have used Vredestein Sprint tyres 185x 16 these have worked well as an all round tyre.

Richard Worts

I thought I'd enter the discussion at this point. My only experience with tyres is on the Mk III. As bought it sat on Avon cross-pplies (I don't remember the size but I still have them if anyone is interested [in the size or the tyres]). I quickly swapped these for Avon Turbosteels (185x16), which have served me very well. I've had no problems with grip in the dry or wet but they do make the steering heavy at parking speed. I have not noticed excessive road noise but this may be drowned out by wind, exhaust and engine noise and axle whine. When I bought the current tyres I don't recall there being any other choice.

I was at the AMOC Concours at Greenwich at the weekend and I did a survey of all the few Feltham cars there. Most were using Avon Turbosteel; one with 175x16. One was still using Avon cross-pplies and one was

fitted with Michelin Pilot 600x16 "Taxi" tyres. The latter somehow did not look right, I think because the shoulders are too round.

In the UK the Avon Turbosteel appear to be the cheapest at £215. I use the word cheap in the context of circa £400 each for tyres for my Audi A5. Other radial road tyres available (in price order) are Michelin X, Pirelli Cinturato, Vredestein Classic and Michelin Pilote X at £347. There are also different speed ratings with Michelin X at SR (112 mph), Vredestein at HR (130mph), Michelin Pilot X at WR (168mph) and the rest at VR (149mph). So I guess the Michelin X is borderline for the DB Mk III but the rest are fine.

Alan Swaisland

I bought AVON Turbosteel 185 VR 16 this march from MWS International LTD (about 165 GBP plus VAT) and I am very happy with. I did already two heavy rallyes with dry and very wet conditions. You can buy the Vredesteins and Avons much more cheaper in Germany directly at Münchner Oldtimer Reifen GmbH (www.oldtimer-reifen.com) or the Vredesteins directly in Holland.

Bernd Dannenmaier

I have Pirelli Cinturatos on my Mark III. 185 VR 16 radials with Michelin inner tubes. I note they are made in Turkey and are marked "For Vintage Car Only". We did a long tour from the UK to Italy last year with wet weather over the Alps and I found them excellent - plenty of grip from the softish rubber, pleasingly quiet and personally I like the traditional wrap-around tread pattern. Slow speed steering is heavy but more fun than working out in a gym.

Barry Halton

I have Avon crossplies and am quite happy with them despite my specialist (Davron) trying to convince me to go with Vredestein radials every time I visit!

Richard Branch